



*Maine Center for Disease
Control and Prevention*

*An Office of the
Department of Health and Human Services*

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Dear Director,

Some homeless shelters in Maine have had recent problems with bedbugs. Bedbugs do not transmit disease, but they are a nuisance and bites can become infected if not kept clean.

Bed bug bites usually cause small, itchy red bumps on the surface of the skin. Bedbug bites should be differentiated from scabies, body lice, and fleas. Diagnostic clues for bedbugs include bites occurring in a line or cluster and bites that occur at night. Unlike body lice, bed bugs are rarely found on affected persons or their clothing. Bites should be kept clean to prevent infection. Itching can be managed symptomatically with topical creams and/or oral antihistamines.

The common bed bug (*Cimex lectularius*) is a wingless, red-brown, blood-sucking insect that grows up to ¼ of an inch in length and has a lifespan from 4 months up to 1 year. Bed bugs hide in cracks and crevices in beds, furniture, floors, and walls during the daytime and emerge at night to feed on their preferred host, humans. Infestations in shelters are difficult to eradicate. It is important to combine insecticide treatments with environmental measures such as laundering bed linens, vacuuming rooms, and cleaning mattresses. Insecticides, if used, should be applied by a professional exterminator.

Information on bedbugs is available at: <http://www.ca.uky.edu/entomology/entfacts/ef636.asp>
Should you require additional assistance, please contact Public Health Nursing at 1-877-763-0438.

Sincerely,

Jan Morrisette, MSN, RN
Director, Public Health Nursing

Sally-Lou Patterson
Director, Division of Infectious Disease